

23 November 1959

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REF

- a. Increasing the frequency of tests. Written tests have normally been scheduled five days every two weeks, with additional testing days as required. Up to the present time, voluntary examinees have not appeared in sufficient numbers to strain the testing facilities to capacity. For this reason, we have requested a machine run of individuals who have claimed language proficiency on Form 444C, Language Data Record. We plan to submit to each Agency component a list of those who have not voluntarily presented themselves to be tested, and on the basis of the anticipated sharp increase in examinees, we plan to schedule a minimum of three testing days each week. This and further expansion will almost certainly require extra help, as discussed in e, below. We are also considering a method by which the testing room will be filled to capacity each testing day; if less than the twenty-eight available spaces have been requested two days prior to the scheduled examination we shall accept applicants for tests in any desired languages. This will permit us to continue conducting simultaneous oral examinations in the scheduled language whenever practicable, a time-saving device which permits an individual to complete his testing with one visit to the LAS area.

- b. Arranging for tests to be administered by local staffs at major field stations. Responding to inquiries, we previously have indicated feasibility of administering written tests at field stations that can provide essential supervision. We also will endeavor to develop a guide for oral testing. We are at present developing new means of standardizing oral tests which will, we hope, minimize deviations resulting from decentralization of control over oral tests. These methods must first be tested at Headquarters, which will require delaying overseas oral testing until about March 1960.

c. Revise written tests to shorten the time required to complete them. The written tests are designed to test competence over the entire range of proficiency from "slight" to "native" and to provide evaluations with a degree of accuracy required for Agency purposes in the selection and utilization of personnel in assignments requiring language facility. It is our belief that use of a shorter test would sacrifice either range or accuracy, or both, of proficiency evaluation. We propose, however, to keep this desire in mind continuously as we use and revise tests.

d. Continue to make full use of LAS staff and contract personnel to administer oral tests. This will continue to be done to the maximum degree permitted by need for accuracy and objectivity. Use of panelists from outside LAS will continue to be essential, particularly in languages for which LAS has no native speakers or for testees who have been students of LAS faculty. A breakdown of oral testing since June 1958 reveals that in 480 oral panels, 700 man-hours have been spent by 32 LAS staff and contract members, and 573 hours by 126 staff members from outside LAS. It may readily be seen that the LAS members have contributed a very great deal, but it has also been necessary to draw upon the services of other individuals. We have required assistance from outside the Agency in less than a dozen instances, and only in the most unusual languages. An additional point which may be of interest is that we plan a revision of the oral grading system, defining more specifically the standards for each level of proficiency, in order to facilitate grading by all panelists, whether from LAS or other components.

e. Requirements, if any, for assistance in administering and scoring written tests. We will freely and gratefully call for assistance, as suggested, whenever needed during peak periods. If an accelerated test schedule continues permanently, it may become necessary to request full-time help.

2. Streamlining the testing program to the maximum degree that does not sacrifice reliability of the results required by the Agency for the utilization of personnel, and incidentally for the awards program, should now be possible of accomplishment with the recent unification of all testing under [REDACTED] as Chief of the Testing Section.

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3. In conclusion, I believe that increase in validation by tests of the number of claimed proficiencies from the present 25 per cent to the desired 75 per cent, or even a hundred per cent, will be accelerated only as testing ceases to be voluntary and becomes directed by the various components. I feel that we are capable of meeting promptly

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any increased demand for written and oral testing in the languages of primary current concern to the Agency, and of meeting by one means or other largely personal desires for testing in other languages.

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